

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2324

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CINCUSAREUR HEIDELBERG
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BONN 07304

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NICOSIA FOR THE SECRETARY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, GW
SUBJECT: BRANDT'S RESIGNATION: AN EXPLANATION AND
PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

REF: A. BONN 7277; B. STATE 93432

SUMMARY: WE HAVE TALKED WITH SEVERAL SOURCES CLOSE TO
BRANDT AND THE SPD LEADERSHIP IN AN EFFORT TO ASSESS HIS
RESIGNATION AND THE LIKELY IMPACT ON THE GERMAN
POLITICAL SCENE. SCHMIDT WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY TAKE
OVER AS CHANCELLOR, GENSCHER WILL--DESPITE SOME
DIFFICULTIES WITH THE SPD OVER HIS ROLE IN THE RECENT
SPY CASE--BECOME VICE-CHANCELLOR AND FOREIGN MINISTER,
AND SCHEEL WILL BECOME PRESIDENT. SOME SHAKEUP IN THE
CHANCELLERY AND CABINET WILL TAKE PLACE, ALTHOUGH
SCHMIDT WILL HAVE TO MOVE CAREFULLY FOR HE CANNOT AFFORD
TO ALIENATE BRANDT AND WEHNER, NEITHER OF WHOM PARTICU-
LARLY LIKES THE PROSPECTIVE CHANCELLOR. BRANDT WILL
REMAIN SPD PARTY CHAIRMAN BUT POSSIBLY ONLY FOR A
LIMITED TIME. SCHMIDT'S DOMESTIC POLICIES WILL
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PROBABLY BE TRIMMED SOMEWHAT TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF FDP
PRESSURES SINCE HE KNOWS THE SPD CANNOT AFFORD AN INTRA-
COALITION IDEOLOGICAL CONFRONTATION AT THIS POINT. ON
FOREIGN POLICY, SCHMIDT IS A SOUND PRO-US AND PRO-
ALLIANCE POLITICIAN AND COOL TOWARD THE EC AND FRANCE,
AND GENSCHER WILL BE LIKELY TO SHARE THESE VIEWS.
BRANDT'S RESIGNATION MAY IN THE END STRENGTHEN THE SPD,
IF NOT IN TIME FOR THE JUNE ELECTIONS IN LOWER SAXONY,

PERHAPS OVER THE LONGER RUN, FOR SCHMIDT WILL BE A STRONG AND MORE AGGRESSIVE LEADER WHO COULD PROVE AN ATTRACTIVE SPD CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE IN 1976. END SUMMARY.

1. WE TALKED WITH SEVERAL SOURCES CLOSE TO BRANDT AND THE SPD LEADERSHIP EARLY MAY 7 IN AN EFFORT TO FIND A REASONABLE EXPLANATION FOR HIS RESIGNATION AND TO ASSESS WHAT IT MEANS FOR THE PARTY AND FOR THE FUTURE. WE HAVE ALSO DISCUSSED WHAT SORT OF DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN POLICIES WE CAN EXPECT WITH THE NEW FEDERAL GOVERNMENT UNDER SCHMIDT'S LEADERSHIP. FOLLOWING IS THE GIST OF OUR FINDINGS SO FAR.

2. OUR SOURCES, WHO ARE RELIABLE AND CLOSE TO BRANDT AND HIS INNER CIRCLE, TOLD US THAT BRANDT'S DECISION TO RESIGN WAS TAKEN ON SUNDAY, MAY 5. DURING A SESSION AT THE CHANCELLERY AIMED AT WORKING OUT A GOVERNMENT REPORT ON THE GUILLAUME SPY AFFAIR FOR PRESENTATION TO THE BUNDESTAG THIS WEEK, BRANDT REPORTEDLY SAW THAT ALL OF HIS ADVISERS, BOTH SPD AND FDP, WERE CLEARLY OUT TO SAVE THEIR OWN SKINS AND THAT NO ACCOUNT WAS BEING TAKEN OF BRANDT'S OWN VULNERABLE POSITION. AT THAT POINT, HE DECIDED FINALLY AND FIRMLY TO TAKE THE RESIGNATION STEP WHICH (AS WE REPORTED IN BONN 2677 SOME THREE

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O P 071455Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 04 BONN 07304

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MONTHS AGO) HAS BEEN IN THE BACK OF HIS MIND FOR SOME
TIME.

3. ONE SOURCE, WHO TALKED WITH BRANDT ON MAY 4, SAID THE CHANCELLOR WAS EVEN THEN QUITE DOWN IN SPIRITS. BRANDT VIEWED THE GUILLAUME SPY AFFAIR AS SIMPLY THE LAST FACTOR IN AN ESSENTIALLY NEGATIVE SITUATION FOR THE SPD. THE PARTY WAS NOT DOING WELL IN LOCAL ELECTIONS AND SHOWED FEW PROSPECTS OF IMPROVING ITS POSITION IN THE JUNE LAND ELECTION IN LOWER SAXONY, BRANDT'S ELECTIONEERING EFFORTS THERE NOTWITHSTANDING. INFLATION CONTINUED AS A MAJOR PROBLEM, THE JUSOS WERE A HEADACHE AND WERE COMPLICATING THE SPD'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN, THE FRG'S FOREIGN POLICY-- BOTH ITS WESTPOLITIK AND OSTPOLITIK--WERE NOT NOW SUCCESSFUL.

4. IN SUM, OUR SOURCES SAID BRANDT SIMPLY CARRIED THROUGH TO THE LOGICAL CONCLUSION THE INSTINCTS AND FEELINGS HE HAS HAD FOR SOME MONTHS, NAMELY THAT FOR THE SAKE OF THE SPD IT WAS TIME FOR HIM TO STEP DOWN. HE REPORTEDLY KNEW THAT NO OTHER SACRIFICIAL FIGURE WOULD SERVE THE SPD AS WELL. ACCORDING TO ONE SOURCE
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CLOSE TO BRANDT, THE BASIC ELEMENT INVOLVED IN THE DECISION WAS NOT SO MUCH THE EAST GERMAN SPY CASE ITSELF, ALTHOUGH THIS HAD HURT BRANDT PERSONALLY; IT WAS, ABOVE ALL, THE FEELING OF LONELINESS AND NON-SUPPORT FROM HIS CLOSE COLLEAGUES IN HARD TIMES THAT MADE UP HIS MIND.

5. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES , BOTH BRANDT AND WEHNER DISLIKE THE HEIR-APPARENT, SCHMIDT, BUT WILL RALLY ROUND IN ORDER TO PRESERVE AND HOPEFULLY STRENGTHEN THE SPD IN THESE PRESENT DIFFICULT DAYS. OUR SOURCES EXPECT THAT SCHMIDT WILL MOVE QUICKLY, ONCE IN POWER, TO REINVIGORATE THE GOVERNMENT. HIS SHAKEUP OF THE CHANCELLERY, THE CABINET AND THE BUREAUCRACIES WILL GO A GOOD DEAL BEYOND ANYTHING THAT BRANDT ORIGINALLY HAD IN MIND AFTER SCHEEL'S DEPARTURE FOR THE PRESIDENCY. OUR SOURCES EXPECT CHANCELLERY AIDES GRABERT AND HARPRECHT TO BE DROPPED. GAUS'S POSITION IS UNCLEAR. A HAMBURGER LIKE SCHMIDT, HE MAY WELL END UP AS GOVERNMENT PRESS SPOKESMAN (REPLACING VON WECHMAR) INSTEAD OF GOING TO HEAD THE FRG MISSION IN EAST BERLIN, AS HE IS PRESENTLY SCHEDULED TO DO. BAHR MAY BE KEPT ON FOR OPTICAL REASONS, SINCE SCHMIDT WILL WANT TO AVOID THE IMPLICATION THAT HE IS DUMPING ALL OF BRANDT'S AIDES. OUR SOURCES HAVE STRESSED THAT SCHMIDT WILL NOT HAVE AN ENTIRELY FREE HAND IN REVAMPING THE CHANCELLERY AND GOVERNMENT. HE WILL HAVE TO TAKE ACCOUNT OF BRANDT'S AND WEHNER'S SENSITIVITIES, WITHOUT

WHOSE SUPPORT HE WILL NOT BE ABLE TO CARRY THROUGH A PERSONNEL OR POLITICAL PROGRAM OF ANY MAGNITUDE. HE SIMPLY DOES NOT HAVE SUFFICIENT CONTROL OF THE PARTY AT THIS EARLY JUNCTURE, AS OUR CONTACTS HAVE POINTED OUT.

6. ACCORDING TO OUR SOURCES, SEVERAL MINISTERS WILL BE DROPPED: JAHN (JUSTICE), EPPLER (ECONOMIC COOPERATION), VON DOHNYANI (EDUCATION AND SCIENCE), FOR SCHMIDT IS SAID TO CONSIDER THEM TOO WEAK AND/OR NOT ATTUNED TO HIS OWN VIEWS. AMONG THE KEY MINISTERS THAT WILL REMAIN ARE LEBER (DEFENSE), ARENDT (SOCIAL WELFARE) AND FRIDERICH (ECONOMICS). IT IS ALSO EXPECTED THAT
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EHMKE (RESEARCH AND TECHNOLOGY) WILL SURVIVE, PARTLY BECAUSE SCHMIDT RESPECTS HIS TOUGHNESS AND PARTLY BECAUSE EHMKE WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO DUMP WITHOUT A FIGHT, SOMETHING THE SPD DOES NOT NOW NEED. IT IS EXPECTED, WE ARE TOLD, THAT FONOFF STATE SECRETARY APEL (ANOTHER HAMBURGER) CAN BE EXPECTED TO MOVE INTO A MORE SENIOR POSITION SINCE HE IS CLOSE TO SCHMIDT.

7. ONE QUESTION THAT REMAINS SOMEWHAT OPEN, ACCORDING TO OUR CONTACTS, IS THAT OF INTERIOR MINISTER GENSCHER'S POSITION. ALTHOUGH THE SPD, AND BRANDT IN PARTICULAR, ARE IRRITATED OVER GENSCHER'S ATTEMPT TO SHIFT THE BLAME FOR THE GUILLAUME CASE FROM HIMSELF TO THE CHANCELLERY, OUR SOURCES CONSIDER THAT THE PRACTICAL FACTS OF POLITICAL LIFE ARE SUCH THAT GENSCHER WILL EMERGE INTACT AS VICE-CHANCELLOR AND FOREIGN
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O P 071455Z MAY 74

FM AMEMBASSY BONN
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 03 OF 04 BONN 07304

NOFORN

HAVE TO MAKE DO WITH GENSCHER. ONE OF OUR SOURCES SAID
THAT IT WAS EVEN CONCEIVABLE THAT SCHMIDT AND GENSCHER

TWO TOUGH AND ABLE POLITICIANS, MIGHT EVEN DEVELOP INTO A VERY POWERFUL TEAM: THEIR RELATIONSHIP MIGHT NOT BE AS WARM AS THAT OF BRANDT AND SCHEEL BUT THE END EFFECT COULD BE A MORE HARD-HITTING AND EFFECTIVE FRG LEADERSHIP.

8. A LARGE QUESTION THAT REMAINS OPEN IS JUST HOW LONG BRANDT WILL STAY ON AS SPD PARTY CHAIRMAN. HIS TERM EXPIRES IN 1975. OUR SOURCES EXPECT HIM TO TRY TO PLAY AN ELDER STATESMAN'S ROLE IN UPCOMING LAND AND LOCAL ELECTIONS IN AN EFFORT TO STRENGTHEN THE SPD. SHOULD THIS EFFORT FAIL, HOWEVER, ONE SOURCE BELIEVES THAT THE SPD LEADERSHIP--AND BRANDT HIMSELF--WILL SEE THE HAND-WRITING ON THE WALL AND CALL FOR A SPECIAL PARTY CONVENTION, PERHAPS EVEN LATE THIS YEAR, IN ORDER TO ELECT A NEW CHAIRMAN. THIS IS A DELICATE TASK, OBVIOUSLY, FOR SCHMIDT CANNOT APPEAR TO BE ACTING TOO HASTILY TO DUMP A MAN WHO WAS AFTER ALL A POPULAR GERMAN AND SPD LEADER. MOREOVER, AS ONE SOURCE POINTED OUT, THE NEW PARTY CHAIRMAN WOULD BE THE SPD CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE IN 1976 AND SCHMIDT CANNOT APPEAR TOO EAGER
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TO PUSH HIMSELF FORWARD TOO QUICKLY. SO, THE FEELING IS THAT SCHMIDT WILL MOVE SLOWLY IN THIS AREA.

9. THIS FACTOR HAS CERTAIN IMPLICATIONS FOR THE SPD'S FUTURE, HOWEVER, SINCE BRANDT (AND WEHNER) WILL THEN BE CHARGED WITH HANDLING THE JUSOS. OUR SOURCES SAID THAT WHILE SCHMIDT, FOR DOMESTIC POLITICAL REASONS, MIGHT LIKE TO DUMP A FEW HUNDRED OF THE MORE EXTREME LEFTISTS, BRANDT AND WEHNER WILL PROBABLY BE MORE CAUTIOUS. ONE OF OUR CONTACTS SAID THAT THERE SEEMED TO BE SOME GENERAL AGREEMENT AT THE TOP IN THE SPD, HOWEVER, THAT A FEW OF THE "UGLIER" FAR-OUT JUSOS WOULD HAVE TO BE EXPELLED FROM THE PARTY SIMPLY TO ASSURE THE POPULATION THAT THE SPD IS TAKING THE LEFTIST RADICALISM ISSUE SERIOUSLY.

10. AS FAR AS DOMESTIC POLICY IS CONCERNED, OUR SOURCES ARE TOLD THAT SCHMIDT AND GENSCHER WILL TRY TO ARRIVE AT PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS ON A VARIETY OF OUTSTANDING ISSUES, WITH SCHMIDT PROBABLY BEING PREPARED, FOR THE SAKE OF PRESERVING UNITY, TO AVOID UNSEEMLY AND POTENTIALLY DANGEROUS INTRA-COALITION DISPUTES AT A TIME WHEN THE COALITION CANNOT AFFORD THEM. THUS, ONE SOURCE SAID THAT HE EXPECTED SCHMIDT TO TAKE ON THE SPD'S TRADE UNION LEADERSHIP FAIRLY SOON, FOR EXAMPLE, ON THE PROBLEM OF INDUSTRIAL CO-DETERMINATION: SCHMIDT WOULD REPORTEDLY TELL THE LEADERSHIP TO STOP MAKING TROUBLE OTHERWISE THE SPD WOULD FIND ITSELF IN DEEP

TROUBLE WITH ITS COALITION PARTNER. THE SAME IS SAID
TO BE TRUE OF SCHMIDT'S ATTITUDE TOWARD OTHER DOMESTIC
REFORMS. HE REPORTEDLY WANTS NO DIFFICULTIES AT THIS
POINT WITH THE FDP ON IDEOLOGICAL GROUNDS. HE IS
LOOKING MORE AT THE PRACTICAL POLITICAL PROBLEMS HE WILL
FACE IN COMING WEEKS.

11. ON FOREIGN POLICY, SCHMIDT'S POSITIONS ARE WELL-
KNOWN. OUR SOURCES EXPECT HIM TO MAINTAIN HIS PRO-US,
PRO-ALLIANCE STANCE, HIS RATHER COOL VIEW OF THE EC,
AND HIS DISDAIN FOR THE FRENCH--ALTHOUGH HE DOES CLAIM
TO HAVE A GOOD PERSONAL AND WORKING RELATIONSHIP WITH

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O P 071455Z MAY 74
FM AMEMBASSY BONN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2327
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 04 OF 04 BONN 07304

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GISCARD D'ESTAING WHICH COULD BE USEFUL IF THE LATTER
BEATS MITTERAND. IT IS RATHER LESS CLEAR WHERE SCHMIDT
STANDS ON OSTPOLITIK, FOR HE HAS TENDED TO KEEP A
CERTAIN DISTANCE FROM THAT AREA OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS.
OUR SOURCES, WHEN QUERIED, CONCEDED THAT THEY WERE NOT
AWARE OF HIS FEELINGS ON THE SUBJECT. THEY DID FEEL
THAT HE WOULD BE MORE TIGHT-FISTED THAN BRANDT AND
SCHEEL AS FAR AS EXTENSION OF CREDITS TO THE EAST WAS
CONCERNED.

12. COMMENT: WHILE THE ABOVE COMMENTS COME FROM

PERSONS SYMPATHETIC TO THE SPD, THEIR VIEWS SOUND CREDIBLE FOR THE MOST PART AND FIT IN WITH WHAT WE HEAR FROM LOCAL GERMAN AND FOREIGN SOURCES. SOME OF THE ASSERTIONS IN THIS MESSAGE REPRESENT SPEEDY REACTIONS TO FAST-MOVING EVENTS AND MAY CHANGE AS NEW DEVELOPMENTS OCCUR AND AS THE RESULT OF THE PRESENT JOCKEYING FOR POWER BECOMES KNOWN.

13. ONE POINT IS PERHAPS WORTH MAKING: BRANDT'S DECISION TO RESIGN WAS OBVIOUSLY BUILDING UP FOR SOME TIME, AND THE GUILLAUME AFFAIR SIMPLY SERVED TO OVERBURDEN A MAN WHO ALREADY FELT HE WAS SHOULDERING AN CONFIDENTIAL

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ENORMOUS LOAD. IT IS NO SECRET THAT HE WAS BECOMING PHYSICALLY AND MENTALLY DRAINED AFTER FIVE YEARS IN OFFICE. THE OLD ENERGY AND DRIVE, WHICH USED TO EMERGE IN TIMES OF STRESS, WERE NO LONGER THERE, AND HE APPARENTLY KNEW IT. SO HE HAS DEPARTED THE SCENE WITH SOME DIGNITY AND DISPATCH. IN THE END, HE MAY HAVE MADE A MAJOR AND POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION TO THE SPD BY DOING SO. EVEN CDU SYMPATHIZERS FEAR THAT A POSSIBLE WAVE OF SYMPATHY MAY AFFECT THE FORTHCOMING LOWER SAXONY ELECTIONS FAVORABLY FOR THE SPD.

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